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Claim 12 (currently amended): ~~A support disc in accordance with claim 1,~~  
ceramic heat conductor support disc for supporting an electrical heating element  
for electrically heated industrial furnace installations, said support disc  
comprising: a disc body having a predetermined thickness; a center aperture  
having a central axis lying parallel to a longitudinal axis of the disc body and of a  
heating element; at least one intermediate aperture located between said center  
aperture and an outer periphery of the disc body; wherein the disc includes at  
least one elongated opening extending from said periphery to at least one of said  
intermediate apertures; wherein each elongated opening extends through the  
entire thickness of said disc and the number of elongated openings is less than  
the number of intermediate apertures; wherein the at least one elongated  
opening extends from an outwardly-positioned intermediate aperture to an  
inwardly-positioned intermediate aperture, relative to the disc periphery; and  
wherein the at least one elongated opening serves to reduce thermal stresses  
produced within the support disc during heating of the heating element to reduce  
thermally induced disc cracking during exposure of the support disc to furnace  
operating temperatures and to thermal cycling.

Claim 13 (currently amended): ~~A support disc in accordance with claim 1,~~  
ceramic heat conductor support disc for supporting an electrical heating element for  
electrically heated industrial furnace installations, said support disc comprising: a  
disc body having a predetermined thickness; a center aperture having a central axis  
lying parallel to a longitudinal axis of the disc body and of a heating element; at